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The Poem "De Rance."

BY

J. W. CUNNINGHAM.

D E R A N C È :

A P O E M .

BY

J. W. CUNNINGHAM, A. M.



MIDDLEBORO, MASS.

PUBLISHED BY STILLMAN PRATT.

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INTRODUCTION.

The plot of the following beautiful Poem was laid amid the scenes of the seventeenth century. The hero of the story, Abbot DE RANCE, the descendant of an ancient English family, was born in Paris, in 1626. His ancestors were high in office and of honorable rank. The Godfather of De Rance was the celebrated Cardinal Richlieu. Mary de Medicis paid him special honors. Being born a titled dignitary, he was early destined to the profession of arms, but by the death of a brother he became at the age of ten, the eldest of the family. He, therefore, studied for the priesthood and became possessor of all the benefices belonging to his brother. When twenty-six, his father died, leaving him an annual income of more than \$6000. Of high birth, great personal attractions, courtly manners, untold wealth, possessed of superior mental endowments, a commanding eloquence, glowing with the fire of youth, it is not strange that as temptations beset his path, he should abandon himself to delusive vanities; such was the sad result. He soon lost the spirit of his holy office, became fond of hunting, gaming, luxury and dissipation. Having formed an intimacy with a beautiful lady of high rank, his love for her became an unquenchable passion. The result of her seduction was premature death. After this, De Rance's grief became unbounded, so that he spent his time in wandering through the most solitary woods, pouring

out torrents of tears, calling upon the deceased as if she could hear his wailings. His emotions betrayed him into the belief that there were methods of invoking the dead. But, after trying these mysterious arts, in vain, he was convinced of their folly. This mental anguish brought on a sickness, which nearly proved fatal. On recovering, his melancholy increased. The lapse of time brought no alleviation. To him, trials as usual came in clusters. Powerful friends suffered misfortunes, or, suddenly died. The result was, that De Rance became convinced of the vanity of all earthly possessions. Disappointed in the most powerful of human passions, he at length became misanthropic and renounced the world. By severe afflictions, he learned the important truth, that God is the only proper object of supreme attachment. His soul becoming entirely absorbed in this one grand idea, he bestowed his extensive estates on charitable purposes, resigned his presidency of three Abbeys and two priories.

In 1664, he took the monastic vow, and according to the spirit of the times, immersed himself in the solitude of La Trappe, a monastery under the most strict rules of St. Benedict. The inmates of this institution were never allowed to speak, perpetual silence being the fundamental rule. The language of the place consisted in signs. They lived in constant mortification of every appetite; their food consisted of herbs, roots, and milk with salt and water. The hours, from two to four at night, were spent at their matins. They slept on rough mattresses, but never undressed. Physicians were not suffered to enter the place. Amid these austerities and self-mortifications De Rance spent the residue of his life, and died there at the close of the seventeenth century much lamented.

MIDDLEBORO, 1857.

P R E F A C E .

HE who seeks merely to please, can hope to touch only those chords in our bosoms, which if they vibrate at all, cease to vibrate as soon as the touch is withdrawn. But he who labors also to instruct, and who, with this object, takes up the great themes of morality or religion, illustrating by examples, the misery of vice, or the struggles of virtue, may hope, if the execution of his work at all correspond with the grandeur of his object, to wake in the heart a thousand feelings, which have all the force and permanence of the great principles and interests with which they are allied, and from which they spring.

The proper objects of taste, are beauty and sublimity. And these arise chiefly from the associations suggested to the mind. In order, then, to ascertain the influence of religion upon the pleasures of taste, it may be well, for a moment, to place the irreligious man in situations of which the beauty or sublimity are universally admitted.

Present, then, to the man without religion, a rich and varied landscape. It is *beautiful* to him, and not merely because its lines are regular, or its colors vivid, but because it suggests to his mind a train of images which, from the constitution of our nature, sooth and delight him. He sees in the sunny vale, and laughing valley, signs of peace and plenty, and joy. If he is an agriculturist, he sees arise from every spot, some witness to the principles and capabilities of his favorite art.

If he is a philanthropist, he, perhaps, fancies in every cottage an abode of happiness and love; and in every peasant, a being pure and calm as the scene which he contemplates. But, at this point, the mere economist, or the man of benevolence, will stop. But, on the contrary, introduce the devout man to the same landscape, he also may be an agriculturist, and is necessarily a philanthropist. All the same images, therefore, with those which delighted the man without religion, may present themselves to his taste; but these impressions, by their very nature, decay. At the instant, however, when they are beginning to fade, and when, therefore, the imagination demands some new stimulus, the devout man, perhaps, discovers in the distant horizon, some

" *Slender spire*

And *mazy tower* from deep embowering shades,
Oft rising in the vale, or on the side
Of gently sloping hills, or loftier placed,
Crowning the wooded eminence!"

At once a crowd of new and unfading visions burst upon his mind. He rises in a moment, as it were from earth to heaven. In his eyes, the sunny vale, the unruffled lake, the flock sleeping on the brow, and the cottage peeping from the vineyard, are not merely the signs of mercy and goodness in heaven. The grove, as it whispers, appears to him to say that God is good. Soothed and elevated by this silent reference to the Creator of so fair a scene, he seems himself to gain at once a new property and interest in all he sees:

" His are the mountains, and the vallies his,
" And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
" With a propriety that none can fool,
" But who, with filial confidence inspired,
" Can lift to Heaven an unpresumptuous eye
" And smiling say, '*my Father made them all!*' "

Can it be questioned in which of these two cases the taste will be most gratified—in which instance its enjoyments will be most pure, most numerous, most enduring?

Nor is the case different with regard to those objects usually denominated *sublime*. Place the man, for instance, who is without religion,

amidst the wild and desolate scenery of savage nature, amidst sunless forests, bleak mountains and rocks reft by the lightnings of heaven; the spectacle may, even in his eyes, be truly sublime. If his imagination be vigorous, he at once associates with the landscape many scenes of terror and woe; he, perhaps, peoples the desert with the warriors of other days; he sees them scale the rugged mountain, he hears their shout upon the wind. Perhaps, in each speck which diversifies the face of the wilderness, he fancies the bone of some pilgrim who has perished there. Or, according to his familiarity with history, he connects certain interesting facts with the scenery which he contemplates; and while, perhaps, his insensible companion conceives him merely to be contemplating a barren void, the mighty dead are passing in solemn review before him, and his eye is melted at the recollection of their complicated wants and agonies. He fancies, perhaps, the print of their last struggles upon the sand; and listens to their last groan in the low murmur of the torrent. But these grand illusions are not permanent, soon the images which thus move and interest his mind are exhausted. Images derived from the scenes of this world, as from the events of time, seem to partake of the transitory nature of the scene of their origin. On the contrary, let the man of piety be carried into the same scenes. As he surveys the leafless desert, or blasted rock, steep frowning upon steep, rocks which stand like the skeleton of the world, waiting to be clothed, interminable wastes, where the Creator seems almost to have "forgotten to be gracious," he feels much, in common with the man without religion, to awe and solemnize his mind. His sensibility is not less awakened, his sympathies with the woes and sufferings of other men, and other ages, are not less acute. He begins, as it were, by "exhausting these words;" but then he proceeds to "imagine new." He contemplates the landscape before him, by the solemn light of the sanctuary. He connects its stern and awful features, with the history of the dispensations of God. He sees in the disordered

face of nature, the evidence of that wrath which broke up the fountains of the great deep, swept the earth with its hurricane, and involved in one universal ruin, the race of man.

There is indeed, no pure and chastened gratification which the devout spectator is not able to enjoy, in common with the man of the world. If a lover of the fine arts, he also will rejoice to fix his eye, and let loose his imagination on the birth-place of his favorite pursuits. If a scholar, he will delight to study the pages of antiquity in the light by which they were written, and amidst the scenes by which many of their images and expressions were suggested. Many are the images of tender melancholy and mitigated awe, which will thus arise upon his mind. But these are in him only the beginning of those emotions which are properly denominated sublime. To him the wreck of grandeur which is scattered around, in one vast monument of the vengeance of an angry God. He sees inscribed upon the thousand prostrate pillars, the awful lessons, that God will not resign his throne to idols—that mere letters cannot secure the grandeur, or even the permanence of nations. He hears a voice echoing among the deserted walls, which says, ‘happy is the people who have the Lord for their God.’ He sees, as it were, lingering amidst the ruins, the venerable figures of a Socrates or a Plato; and hears them exclaim, “there is no true philosophy but the Bible.” Whilst others survey the mere beauty of the broken altar, he regards it with peculiar awe, as, perhaps, a part of that dedicated to “the unknown God.” And whilst they coldly measure the proportions of the Areopagus, he remembers that he there stands in the footsteps of an apostle, and surveys the ruin of those “temples made with hands,” in which the messenger of heaven had predicted the downfall of idolatry. Here again, then, the question may be confidently asked—is not religion a fruitful source of the sublime—and is not he as bad a philosopher as a christian, who, lifting his hand against religion, strive thereby to annihilate those images of delight or of awe, with

which her hand peoples both the ruins of art, and the wilderness of nature? It is evident that many similar illustrations might easily be produced.

If, however, these suggestions should be considered as of too speculative a nature, it may be desirable to consider how much of the celebrity of men of genius has been owing, either to their possession, or to their assumption, of the religious character.

When, for instance, the *artists* of antiquity undertook to chisel the statues which should command the admiration of all times and places, they did not choose for their subjects the mere heroes of their country, but the gods! It was a Hercules or Appolo, which levied the tribute of applause throughout all the regions of Heathenism. These great men were well acquainted with human nature, and they felt, that those emotions with which the spectator should approach the labors of genius, so as best to appreciate their worth, are called out by some object, which at once lifts him out of this lower sphere, and fills him with awe, astonishment and humility.

In like manner, when the *painters* and sculptors of Italy arose, as it were, from the slumber of ages, they did not roam for subjects in the regions of romance, or even of modern history. They did not even follow the track of older artists amidst the temples of Heathenism; but whilst they profitted from the example of antiquity, they availed themselves of their own more favorable circumstances, and sought their subjects in the pages of the sacred writings.

Thus also in *music*; if it be asked in what circumstances has the genius of music chiefly displayed itself?—it may be answered confidently—when music has borrowed the aid of religion. It is Handel who is the musician of all times and countries. It is Handel who is called “immortal,” from the immortality of the subjects to which he has consecrated his powers. It is Handel who has almost caught a portion of

the inspiration of his themes, and has sung the songs of angels, in strains scarcely unworthy of them—whose music has had power to collect large crowds to commemorate his name, and perpetuate his honors to the remotest ages.

The poets of England may confidently be brought to the same test. Why is it, for instance, that Spencer, though he has half buried his genius in the grave of allegory; though he is often prolix and obscure; though he exhausts the reader by a detail of uninteresting circumstances, is still contemplated, with reverence, as the father of English verse? It is, in great part, for a reason which Milton has assigned—that he is “sage and serious,” that behind the cloud in which he veils his morals, you see the hallowed figures of piety and truth. Why is it again, that Milton, though inferior to his elder brethren of Greece and Rome, in the embodying of his ideas, and the execution of his vast designs, yet takes the precedency of them? It is partly, because his theme embraces all the highest concerns of man.

There is only one point more to which the author feels it necessary to advert. He has been taught, by frequent experience, that there are certain topics on which it is difficult not to be misunderstood—and such a topic appears to be that change of character which is wrought by the influence of religion upon the mind. If any critic, then, should be tempted to represent him as desiring to give, in the history of De Rance, such a precedent as may encourage the hopes of the enthusiast, or betray his readers into a conception, that a youth of profligacy is likely to end in an old age of religion—the author begs leave, to disclaim any such intention. He well remembers the sentiment of a distinguished divine, upon the only case of late repentance, which is recorded in the Scriptures: “one instance is given that the humble may not despair—and but one, that the careless may not presume.”

CANTO FIRST.

DE RANCE.

CANTO FIRST.

1.

“ I tell thee, Eugene, it is CHANCE
That speeds the arrow's fatal flight ;
Life is the momentary glance,
Of morn before an endless night—
Death is but dreamless, endless sleep :
Those who are wept, and those who weep,
From the cold grave to which they go,
Rise never or to joy or wo ;
I bow the knee to Chance alone,
And worship at her shadowy throne.”

2.

Thus spake De Rance—and no sign
In earth or heav'n was seen ;
No reddening bolt, from hand divine,
Flam'd in the blue serene.
All, all was silence, as though Chance
Reign'd through the fathomless expanse :
As though no arm those spheres of gold,
On winged wheels, harmonious roll'd :
As though the God of this fair world
Shrunk from the proud defiance hurl'd ;
And, mounted on his cloudy car,
Had fled to other skies afar,
Afraid to wage this Atheist war.

3.

Thus spake De Rance. Who is he
Thus school'd in bold impiety ?
What pregnant spot of Paynim earth
Gave to the godless monster birth ?
Say, did some lawless robber clan
Nurse the infant into man ?
Teach him to tread the path they trod,

To hate his fellow, curse his God ?
Or dwelt the child, bereft, alone,
Where no bright lamp of science shone ;
Like some dark mountain, on whose head
The sun's blest rays were never shed ?
Or on the tented field of strife,
Say—did he breathe the breath of life ?
And, cradled in an ark of blood,
Deemed he the brave alone the good ;
All softer feelings laugh'd to scorn,
His music the shrill bugle horn—
His pride the deeply dented scar—
His only God, the God of war—
For battle lost his only sigh,
His only pray'r for victory ?

4.

No Paynim country gave him birth,
Nor shivering land of night,
Nor starved he 'midst the savage dearth,
Of wisdom's sacred light ;
No robber rear'd him up to man,
A branded outcast from the good,
In no loose camp his life began,

To horrors train'd, and nurs'd in blood.
 The infant op'd his sparkling eye
 In thy fair fields, sweet Brittany ;
 Whence many a martyred Saint of old,
 Arose to fill his throne of gold ;
 And bold crusaders took the road,
 To win the city of their God.
 Nor of a sordid race was he,
 Sprung from thy stem, great Chavigni ;
 Whose title to thy vast domain
 Was writ by mighty Charlemagne.
 Nor lack'd he aught that man could give,
 To bid his lifeless virtues live.
 With sign of cross, at blessed font,
 Richlieu had stamp'd his infant front ;
 In cloister'd cell, with lessons sage,
 Grave priests had fed his tender age ;
 And taught his ardent eye to pore,
 O'er classic tomes, and holy lore.

5.

Nor toil'd in vain the letter'd monk :
 Into De Rance's thirsty ear,

And thirstier memory, deeply sunk,
 These lessons to fair science dear.
 And he was skill'd, from earliest age,
 To delve in mathematic mine,
 Or roam along the breathing page,
 Where Tully's living splendors shine ;
 Or scan, with philosophic eye,
 The blazing wonders of the sky ;
 And he could touch the sacred lyre,
 And glow with all a prophet's fire—
 They came to hear a *prophet* sing,
 Alas ! a *demon* swept the string.

6.

The poet's lamp, as poets tell,
 Is kindled only at the skies ;
 But there's a flame—the birth of hell,
 Which sometimes lights the poet's eyes.
 Such was De Rance's— and the flash
 Which shot along his vivid page,
 Like that which wakes the pealing crash,
 And strife of elemental rage.
 That flash could stir the soul to war,
 But could not light the pilgrim's road ;

1*

Oh!—it was not that eastern star,
 That led the guilty to his God.
 It lit unconsecrated flame
 In many a virgin's snowy breast ;
 It bleach'd the reddening cheek of shame ;
 It scorch'd the vestal's modest vest ;
 Unawed, its desolating fires,
 The hallow'd hill of GOD assail ;
 They strike the temple's awful spires
 They rend its venerable veil.

7.

Such was De Rance's foul offence ;
 A fouler sees not heaven—
 To blot the bright intelligence,
 For holiest purpose given—
 To turn the sword which GOD has steel'd
 Against the eternal throne—
 To lift the wither'd arm HE heal'd
 Against the Mightiest One.
 I'd rather be the wretch who scrawls
 His idiot nonsense on the walls—
 His gallant bark, of reason wreck'd,
 A poor quench'd ray of intellect ;

Not quite a man, nor quite a brute—
 Than I would basely prostitute
 My powers, to serve the cause of vice,
 To build some jewell'd edifice,
 So fair, so foul—form'd with such art
 To please the eye, and soil the heart ;
 That he, who has not power to shun,
 Comes, looks, and feels himself undone.

8.

'Tis true that, in her hurried flight,
 On some diviner themes
 De Rance's soaring muse would light—
 To hate them all she seems ;
 And harpy-like, she soars and sings,
 And sheds pollution from her wings.
 Where sweet Provence her blushing rose
 Hangs on the rocks, or gay alcove,
 Her thousand maidens all arose
 To hear De Rance sing of LOVE.
 They came, they heard, they turn'd away—
 Oh! 'twas a song impure and rude ;
 He did not paint th' ethereal ray,
 Which warms the bosom of the good.

His harp he swept with bolder hand,
 To hymn the praise of LIBERTY ;
 Around, a thousand warriors stand
 To catch the blessed harmony.
 They came, they heard, they turn'd away—
 More loyal than the brave are none ;
 They loath'd the lawless, graceless lay,
 Which curs'd the altar and the throne.*

9.

Such was the bard, and such the mind—
 Himself the model of his verse ;
 Bad though the portrait he design'd,
 The sad original was worse.
 His was the lawless love, the hate
 Which time nor space can mitigate ;
 The giant rage the hills which rent,
 And hurl'd them at the Omnipotent.
 Such was the bard, and, O ! his look
 Bore witness to the hell within—
 Study that face—you read a book,
 Stamp'd with the wretchedness of sin.
 And yet, upon this haggard face,
 Would sometimes wake a sudden grace ;

A milder beam would warm his eyes,
 A blush upon his cheek arise,
 Which seemed to say—that, in that breast,
 By demon spirits long possess'd,
 Virtues with vices rarely link'd
 Lay pent, and struggling, not extinct ;
 And promis'd that, in happier hours,
 This rugged soil should burst with flowers,
 But—better trust the fleeting skies,
 Than all these airy prophecies ;
 What flowers are now—are such as those
 That spring on Ætna's ardent side ;
 The peasant climbs to pluck the rose,
 As at his touch, the fiery tide
 Sweeps down the mountain and he dies
 To his fool's hopes a sacrifice.

10.

De Rance lov'd the chase—his horn
 Would often wake the lazy morn ;
 And, echoing the dark woods among,
 Rouse to the sport the loitering throng.
 O, it was brave to see them mount,
 When numbers you could scarcely count,
 With sylvan trophies gayly deck'd,

And champing coursers, rainbow-neck'd,
Issued in all the pride of state,
From Viret's antiquated gate,
Dashing the virgin frost away
Which silvers every dancing spray—
To see them bit the indignant steed,
Now urge, and now restrain his speed ;
And, now, some misty headland scale,
Whence they may view the waking vale,
The kindling orb, half set, half risen,
Just breaking from his cloudy prison ;
Of day and night the dubious strife,
The landscape struggling into life—
O, it were brave—could you forget,
That on De Rance's brow is set
Thy mitre Tours—to man terrene,
Nought but a crown of thorns I ween ;
That heaven has to his watch consign'd,
A measureless expanse of mind,
Souls that are kindred with the sky,
The sparks, the breath, of Deity.
Who, if the reckless shepherd sleep,
Ah, *who* shall feed these million sheep ?

11.

Many a chase have hunters rode,

Swift as the mountain wind ;
All, all, the panting courser goad,
One half are left behind.
But never chase like that was known,
When from the woods that skirt the Rhone,
The deer was rous'd—his fiery glance
Stretching at once o'er half of France.
He spans her vales, he climbs her steeps,
From giddy rock to rock he leaps,
And covers, in a single chase,
Plains it fatigues the eye to trace :
See, now, he flags, he gasps for breath,
Hangs over him the bird of death,
He dives into the yawning flood—
Dyed are its silver waves with blood.

12.

But, who are those, the mighty two,
Sole relics of the Sylvan crew,
That headlong from yon hill descend ?
De Rance, and De Rance's friend,
The noble Eugene—two in name,
In love, or fiery hate, the same.
Of all the troop that rous'd the deer.
But these, his dying murmurs hear ;

And their's, if mead it be—the mead—
The honors of his palmy head ;
Which mounted high, in hall of state,
The hunter's praise shall celebrate.

13.

The chase is o'er—and spent the day—
The sun's last ineffectual ray
Dies on the mountains—not a star
Shines o'er their path—alone, afar
The hunters tread some unknown soil,
Through weary wastes, and forests toil ;
They see alone the lightning's gleam,
They hear alone the raven's scream,
Or lean wolf's melancholy howl,
Or screeches of the boding owl.
But in De Rance's frozen breast,
Was cowering fear an unknown guest ;
And, dark or light—'twas one to him,
The battle, or the cloister dim ;
The icy caverns of the dead,
Where the pale ghost is thought to tread ;
At all, this man of iron laughed ;
Draughts from the holy chalice quaffed,

- And cursed, for superstitious fool,
 The man who, taught in stricter school,
 • With reverend eye, and feet unshod,
 Approached the altar of his God.

14.

Nor blame I him whose smile severe,
 Rebukes the superstitious fear
 Of fancy-ridden men who quake,
 If but a leaf unbidden shake ;
 Or, if they stumble o'er the tomb,
 Or hear, through evening's deepening gloom,
 A distant bell, with note profound,
 A solemn " requiesant " sound ;
 Or, in some aisle, at dead of night,
 Sees the pale moon's unearthly light
 Cast through the deeply tinted pane,
 What fancy deems, a bloody stain.
 Such fears are growth of sordid root,
 Religion's weeds, and not her fruit ;
 Yet not so vile these baby fears,
 As Levity, which naught reveres ;
 Which, when the thunder shakes the sky,
 Feels not the present Deity ;

Which rashly treads the holy place,
Gazes where angels veil their face ;
And when the shaft of vengeance flies,
Dares it by new impieties.

15.

Such, as fresh terrors mutter round,
As sheeted lightnings swept the ground,
And forky flasbes through the gloom
Seemed opening up a world to come ;
Such was De Rance's impious mood,
Such accents echoed through the wood ;
Boldly the smoking waste he trod ;
He spoke of Chance, and mocked at God.
It was as though some maddening wretch
His pointed steel to heaven should stretch,
Bare to the bellowing cloud his head,
And bid the lightnings strike him dead.

16.

They struck him not—for mercy flew
To sheath the sword which justice drew.
“ But, ah, yon pointed rocks among,
What giant figures steal along ?

Sawest thou De Rance, as the ray,
Of lightning kindled sudden day,
Its living flashes sudden glance
Along some carabine or lance?
There was a hand that grasp'd that steel;
I seemed to see, with hasty wheel,
A martial troop no eye could count,
Check their swift steeds, stop, look, dismount,
And sink yon tangled brakes between,
As though to see and be unseen.
Grant this be not the bloody glen,
Where Pirot keeps his robber den;
And, from the ledges of the rock,
Springs like the tiger on the flock;
For swift, indeed, the traveller's wing,
Who 'scapes that tiger's deadly spring."

17.

Thus, Eugene,—and as yet he spoke,
Another flash the darkness broke:
“Hark! is not that the signal word!”
At once the volloying peal is heard,
The hissing bullet cuts its way,
The ruffians spring upon their prey:

Will no one stay the crimson flood
Of honored Eugene's ebbing blood ?
Will no hand staunch the mortal wound ?
Alas ! he staggers to the ground ;
A robber shuts his stiffened eyes,
And murderers sing his obsequies.

18.

But where's De Rance ? Did he fall
A victim to the fatal ball ?
Or, shielded by an unseen hand,
Did he escape the robber band ?
See him amidst the unequal strife,
Nor spare, nor prodigal of life,
Now boldly deal the dexterous blow,
Now flying from the thickening foe ;
Too brave, what might be met to shun,
Too cool to fight and be undone.
See where he cleaves the lofty crest
Of him who on his footsteps prest ;
And now he gives his courser rein,
And now it smokes along the plain.
Speed, speed, De Rance—in thy rear
Their clattering hoofs of flint I hear ;

Hark! where yon torrent mutters hoarse,
 Thither, ah, thither bend thy course;
 Plunge boldly o'er its rocky side;
 Who knows—that darkly rolling tide
 May save, whom nothing else can save:
 E'en robbers reverence the brave;
 Fear for themselves, respect for thee,
 May give thee life and liberty.

19.

He leaps the rocks—they crowd the brink;
 “ See, see, this daring spirit sink :”
 He rises—mark his struggling hand;
 “ Will none of all the robber band
 Dive for the prey ?” One hardy wretch
 Leaps desperate down—I see him stretch
 His crimson hand—that well-aimed shot,
 Must fix De Rance's lingering lot.

20.

'Tis fired—an angel sees its flight,
 And, stooping from his throne of light,
 Guards with a Seraph wing a breast

Untenanted by heavenly guest ;
Guides the swift ball to where his side
By belt of steel is fortified ;
From which his hunter quiver hung,
And arrow with its forky tongue, '
And bugle, that proclaimed afar
The triumphs of the Sylvan war.
It struck—and, bounding from the blow,
Fell flattened in the wave below.

21.

I will not say, that as he stood
Firm on the mountain brow,
And saw behind that glen of blood,
And gulf that roar'd below ;
And heard the robbers' lessening shout,
And watched them track their backward rout ;
And mused of the unequal strife,
Where Eugene paid his forfeit life ;
And traced upon his shattered side
The death that he had almost died ;
I will not say—*that* heart so rude
Felt not a touch of gratitude ;
That on that mind of thickest night,

Beamed not a ray of heavenly light ;
But, if it beamed, short was the day,
Soon quenched in clouds that morning ray ;
And if a tear bedews his eye,
He hastes that woman's drop to dry.
No accents from his lips arose
To break the mountain's dead repose ;
No echo from the rock or wood
Return'd his song of gratitude, '

CANTO SECOND.

D E R A N C E .

CANTO SECOND.

1.

THE old in guilt, though young in years,
Shed few, and those but transient tears.
The silver dew-drops on the spray,
Which the first sun-beam dries away ;
The weepings of the polar shower,
Which harden ere they reach the flower ;
The insect sporting on the beam,
The fleecy cloud, the summer stream,
The manna melting on the plain,
The midnight image of the brain,
Are not so fugitive and brief,
As *their* unconsecrated grief :

Soon, in the scorching flame of sense,
Dries their pale tear of penitence.
And such, I ween, the swift career
 Of virtue in De Rance's breast ;
Thus dried his penitential tear ;
 Thus sank his shadowy grief to rest.
Whatever met the rising sun,
Had vanished ere his race was run.

2.

The morn is bright, the mountain's side
With million airy tints is dyed ;
Glitters the thorn and purple heath,
And fan him with their dewy breath :
The monarch eagle climbs the sky,
At the fierce sun to light his eye ;
Her giddy course the skylark steers,
To catch the music of the spheres ;
To learn the notes to angels given,
And steal for man the songs of Heaven.

3.

De Rance, musing, trod his way,
" Heaven meant us (cried he) to be GAY ;"

Aye—good and gay : But he who tries
 To cut the knot which nature ties,
 To break the bans proclaimed by God,
 To seek his happiness in Vice,
 Shall feel the terrors of the rod,
 Which sways our mortal destinies.
 Dark are the flowers which round him blow,
 The chaplet on a victim's brow ;
 Sad are the joys of which he's vain,
 The music of a maniac's chain.
 De Rance talked of Peace—her nest
 She made not in that stormy breast.
 She hovers round the martyr's pile,
 She lingers in the sacred aisle,
 Seizes the prisoner's dungeon key,
 Touches his chains—and he is free.
 She hovers o'er the sick man's bed,
 Rests on her downy wing his head ;
 Lifts from bright heaven the awful veil,
 And bids his eye the Godhead hail.

4.

Such peace De Rance never knew ;
 Still as the breath of morning blew,

And flowers the glittering dew-drops quaffed,
And every sunny valley laughed,
And round the giddy Chamois play,
And all the world kept holiday ;
E'en his stern features caught awhile
Sweet nature's universal smile ;
And he who saw, and knew him not,
Had said—" how blest De Rance's lot !"
But he who watched with searching eye
 The smiles that on his pale lips played,
Saw daggered grief in ambush lie,
 Eager to sally from her shade.
Such smiles are sorrow's flimsiest dress,
The tortur'd bosom's drunkenness ;
The roses scattered on a shroud,
The flashes of the thunder cloud.

5.

And now he spans the tedious vales,
And now the mountain's height he scales,
Uncertain, in the blaze of day,
Whither to bend his doubtful way.
But when the star of eve arose,

Her place the fainting traveller knows ;
At once he lifts his aching eye,
And finds his compass in the sky ;
'Tis nature's compass, seen by all
Her traveller's o'er this mazy ball ;
The pilot, as his crazy bark
Shoots round the headland, vast and dark,
Sees, shuddering, as these beacons glow,
The hungry rock that lurk'd below ;
Panting, amidst the dark simoom,
The thirsty Arab waits his doom ;
He hears the death-bird's fatal shriek,
He hears the vulture whet her beak ;
At once, amid the kindling skies,
These million holy lamps arise ;
It seems as though some hand unfurled
A spangled standard to the world ;
To scatter every pilgrim's fears,
To light his path, to dry his tears.
Nor these alone refresh their eye
With yonder jewelled canopy ;
How joys the Saint, in cloister dim,
By this chaste light to chant the hymn,
To let his winged fancy rove
Amidst these orbs of Rest and Love ;

To dream of all that feeds the sight,
 Of those who fill the thrones of light ;
 Whilst ever and anon his ear
 Sweet and mysterious hymnings cheer ;
 Faint echoes of the mystic ode,
 That chants the glory of our God ;
 The song which rolls from east to west,
 Proclaiming that " the good are blest."

6.

Nor only these—De Rance, too,
 Felt courage kindle in the view,
 As bright Orion's belted ray,
 Shed on the night a milder day,
 Not slow, or hesitating, now,
 He boldly breasts the mountain brow ;
 And, piloted by heavenly guides,
 Through dark ravine or torrent glides ;
 Thoughtless, and thankless, onward hies,
 Musing on new felicities ;
 For past and present want the power
 To cheer the bad man's aching eye ;
 And, bankrupt at the present hour,
 He draws upon futurity.

7.

And now the sleeping rocks among,
 Echoes this minstrel's gracious song ;
 The wakeful bird that shuns the morn,
 Sits listening on her pointed thorn ;
 And starts to hear, in spot so lone,
 A song, O, how unlike her own.

“ I was not born, the lamp to trim,”
 Of viewless gods the praise to hymn ;
 To stifle all the joys of sense,
 And make a joy of abstinence.

“ Mine be the lamp of Laura's eye,
 Her praise my only melody ;
 Her's be the shrine at which I bow,
 To her be paid my only vow.”

8.

Here ceased the unpriestly bard to sing ;
 For now the moon with crimson ray,
 Rose on the horizontal ring,
 As reddening at the guilty lay ;

Just as you've seen a sudden blush
Wake on a virgin's cheek of shame,
O'er the pale white unbidden rush,
And wrapt it in a robe of flame.
O, as that conscious orb arose,
How gleams the hill, the vale, the stream,
And all their sleeping charms disclose,
At once to the unobtrusive beam.
It fell upon the snowy flock,
Which slept beneath the frowning rock ;
It fell upon that rock's dark brow,
And seemed to silver it with snow ;
So swiftly all its darkness fled,
So brightly beamed its hoary head.

9.

But, not this flock of silver fleece,
Nor sable brow, in gems arrayed,
Nor sleeping nature's smile of peace,
De Rance's steps delayed.
See, as the moonlight circle spreads,
With what hurrying step he treads ;
And as he gains that mountain top,

I see the eager wanderer stop
 And gaze, as if to pierce the cloud
 Which wraps the valley in its shroud.
 And now I see the moon-beam fall
 On yonder torrent's bannered wall ;
 O, 'tis the hall of Chaumont's power,
 And Laura sleeps in yonder tower ;
 Of that fierce chief, the darling child,
 Nor brighter does yon moon-beam rise,
 Than the swift ray so brightly wild,
 Which flashes in her glancing eyes.

10.

Not brighter—but, alas ! more pure—
 Once she was pure as she was bright,
 De Rance spread the accursed lure,
 And quenched that ray of virgin light.
 Both, nurs'd in superstitious bowers,
 Were pledged to consecrate their hours,
 Their passions, bodies, souls, to God ;
 On all these awful vows they trod.

11.

I laud, and love the man, around

Whose brow, or force, or craft has bound,
Bonds such as these—if he forsake
A bigot's creed, and refuge take
Where sainted mercy's modest gem
Shines in religion's diadem ;
And bigot priestcraft dares not bind
Her gnawing irons on the mind ;
And reason fastens every tie
Forged by the hand of piety.
I laud him if, with high disdain
Of bonds like this he burst his chain,
And nobly panting to be free,
Seek on the soil of Liberty
The honored altar of my sires,
Whose chaste and holy fires,
Kindled by seraph'd hosts above,
Illume the torch of wedded love ;
Rise on us, like some better sun,
And melt two beings into one.
But, red with guilt, the hands which rend
 Their unchanged compact with the skies,
And Deity essay to bend
 To fickle man's inconstancies ;
Who still retain the bigot creed,
 Are strict in faith, but foul in deed.

12.

Such was *their* crimson crime—but who
That saw heaven's arch of liquid blue,
That watch'd the moonlight vault serene,
 That drank the evening's scented breath,
Could dream that in such smiling scene,
 Lay ambush'd deep the bolt of death?
Heaven seemed to lend its brightest ray
To light the robber to his prey;
It did but *seem*—in that fair sky,
Was planted heaven's artillery;
Prophetic rolled that crimson star,
The herald of approaching war.

13.

But, O, De Rance has no eye
For omen, now, or prophecy.
Before that sky has time to lower,
 His lover's feet have swept the vale;
He pants beneath the frowning tower
 Where wont to sing his nightingale.
She sang not now—but yet the lamp
Shone from her airy cell,

As though, of all that drowsy camp,
She was the sleepless sentinel.

14.

But is she sleepless?—then her ear
Must catch the signal note he tries ;
He strains her silver voice to hear,
'Tis echo's heartless voice replies.

“ And can she sleep ! O faithless maid,
Sleep—when De Rance wakes ;
Sleep—when, by steps so long delayed,
His plighted vow he breaks ?

“ Twice seven times rose the summer sun,
He came not with the light ;
As oft its tedious course was run,
He came not with the night.

“ The widowed turtle does not sleep,
She wanders o'er the heath,
She goes alone to droop and weep,
She sleeps the sleep of death.”

15.

Thus sang De Rance—but the strain
 Of anger died upon his lyre ;
 Love mounting on her throne again,
 Extinguished every other fire.
 De Rance loved, as few can love
 Who wantonly delight to rove,
 From sweet to sweet—the honeyed flower
 With thirsty talon to devour ;
 Then wing their flight to unknown sky,
 And leave the withering stalk to die.
 De Rance loved as those have done
 Whose souls are satisfied with *one*.

16.

“ Sleeps she ? ” — he cries — “ a lover’s grief,
 A broken heart’s intense distress,
 In waking dreams denied relief,
 Pursues it in forgetfulness ;
 O, if she sleeps she sleeps in vain ;
 He who should watch her feverish form
 Would see an inward hurricane
 That fairy bower of peace deform.

The body sleeps—the restless mind
Roves wildly on the viewless wind,
Dives with De Rance in the flood,
Shrinks from a dagger wet in blood ;
Like withered hag, with midnight spell,
Peoples the air with shapes of hell,
O, let me wake her—and destroy
These dreams of wo by sights of joy.”
The lover said, and fondly flew
To fright the dreams his fancy drew.

17.

Built on a rock, that high Chateau,
Frown'd on the wondering vale below ;
Its fragments scattered far and nigh,
Taught this world's mutability.
Huge masses of its antique tower,
Beat down by the resistless power
That slowly rears its iron mace,
And shakes the rocky bounds of space,
Lay, in the wildest ruin hurl'd,
Like relics of an older world.
On these, its gaily painted wreath,
The flaunting Clematis had hung ;

And, here and there the purple heath
 Glittering amidst the gray stones sprung ;
Like youth and age, in fond embrace,
Or garland on a beldame's face.
And there, I ween, that no gray stone
Was to De Rance's eye unknown.
For often had he lingered there,
Watching for Laura's foot of air ;
And loitered oft with that weak maid,
Amidst this unfrequented shade.

18

It might have been the thundering shock
 Of crimson-handed war ;
But the hard face of that dark rock
 Was seamed by many a scar ;
It might have been the fiery bolt
 Which, as the angels fell,
Flamed vengeance on their foul revolt,
 And drove them down to hell ;
That deeply rent its iron face,
But, at its stern and awful base,
There yawned upon the startled eye,

Depths which the daring dared not try ;
None dared, save one—whose heart of steel
Felt not the throbs which others feel.
De Rance feared not—though no sound
Disturb'd that cavern'd world profound,
Though nought that lives explored that gloom,
 Save the small bat on leathern wings ;
Though vast the vault as the awful tomb
 Where Egypt sepulchres her kings.

19.

Fearless was he—and oft he trod,
With Lion's heart that drear abode ;
For sooth to tell, when first his lamp
Gleamed on those walls so dark and damp,
And each bright drop appeared a gem
Set in a kingly diadem ;
He saw, amidst that cavern wide,
A door pierced in its rocky side,
Which, opening to a spiral stair,
Led from this region of despair,
From caves where night her vigil kept,
To the lone tower where Laura slept.

Once found, that path was ne'er forgot ;
In these dark caves the lovers plot
How to evade a father's eye,
And how to shroud her infamy.
And often down that spiral stair,
Would Laura wind, like vision fair
Seen in the shades of night—and start,
For fearful is the guilty heart ;
If but a sparkling dew-drop fell,
Or tolled the sullen castle bell.

20.

And 'twas to this deep-veiled ascent,
That now his steps De Rance bent,
Eager to dry the waking tear,
 Or scare the feverish dream,
Night's visionary fear,
 By love's enchanting beam.
He gains the arch—he enters there,
Treads the deep cave, ascends the stair,
Mounts o'er the ample corridor,
Reaches and grasps the unhallowed door.
Nor halts he long—his eager hands

Throw wide the portal, and he stands
 In that fair room which aye had been
 Of his sad joys the blushing scene ;
 The thorny bower of sordid vice,
 The sinner's mournful Paradise.

21.

But where is she—Queen of that bower,
 'Midst many sweet, the sweetest flower ?
 “ Laura—De Rance calls thee—come
 “ Greet a poor wanderer to his home ;
 “ 'Twas force detained me—for my soul,
 “ True as those circlers round the pole,
 “ Ne'er left thee, sweet one—but, with thee
 “ A prisoner, deemed it liberty ;
 “ Laura—De Rance calls thee—come
 “ Find in my breast thy wonted home.”

22.

She lists not—comes not—not a word
 Responsive to his call is heard ;
 No rising laugh, but half concealed,

The playful, hidden maid revealed ;
 No struggling sigh, but half supprest,
 Betrayed the agonized breast.
 'Twas still as death—still as the hour
 When heaven's half exerted power
 Had framed the worlds—had spread the sea,
 But life had not begun to be ;
 “ Laura ! De Rance calls—arise
 “ And sun me with those angel eyes ;
 “ Well mightst thou shroud those orbs in sleep
 “ When thou couldst only wake to weep.”

23.

She rose not—looked not—can it be ?
 “ Is Laura tired of love and me ?
 “ Or, scared to feel herself alone,
 “ To other wing than mine hath flown ?
 “ Return, poor bird, to thy cold nest,
 “ To the altar of De Rance's breast.”
 But, ah ! in yonder distant room
 A lamp half dissipates the gloom :
 “ She MAY be there—ay, there she is ;
 “ Haste, haste De Rance—print thy kiss

“ On those full lips—gaze on that eye,
“ The living throne of ecstasy.”

24.

He comes—O mark his eye-ball glare ;
Not Laura—Laura's CORPSE is there.
Disease has laid his withering hands
On that fair form—the brittle bands,
That chained the soul gave way ;
It burst its tenement of clay
How bright she WAS, let memory dream ;
Death has put out that morning beam.

25.

In coffined pomp, behold her lie,
Vacant that throne of ecstasy,
Extinct, at once, its living fires,
As when the spiry blaze expires,
Of snowy Hecla's ardent head,
And o'er the smoky plains,
A stiller, deeper night is shed,
And double darkness reigns.

"Go print thy kiss on that full lip;"
 Alas!—the bower where bees might sip
 Fragrant no more—that marble cheek
 Corruption's purple fingers streak;
 Though many a flower is scattered there,
 To show that she was young and fair;
 Corruption's dark and fetid breath
 Hangs, cloud like, o'er that bed of death.

26.

De Rance might have learned to endure
 The pangs no mortal hand could cure;
 And to the storm of dark distress
 Have turned the shield of stubbornness;
 Or filled with new and varied bliss
 His aching bosom's sad abyss;
 Perhaps he might have learned to gaze
 On that wan cheek where death might blur,
 But had not power to raze
 Beauty's ethereal character.
 But as he watched the prostrate maid,
 He saw, or seemed to see,
 On that dark brow the darker shade
 Of mental agony.

And stamped upon that front so fair,
The ghastly frown of dumb despair ;
And, lingering on the lip of death,
 A curse on him who broke the fence,
And rudely from the unspotted wreath
 Rent the sweet flower of innocence.
Seemed she from that dark bier to rise,
And fix on him her rayless eyes ;
Seemed she—her fleshless arm to stretch,
As though to drag the struggling wretch
Whom angry heaven refused to save,
Down to her cheerless, hopeless grave ;
There, on a couch of fire to lie,
Wedded in hopeless misery.

27.

It might be fancy—but the power
Of fancy in that penal hour,
When heaven, to avenge the foul abuse
Of goodness, lets its terrors loose ;
Is great, as though her shadowy train
Were not the figments of the brain ;
As though not sketched in lifeless dies,
Her fleet and airy nullities ;

It might be fancy—be it so ;
Still, to the inward eye
More dread such visionary show
Than broad reality.
A single tear he did not shed,
He did not strike his throbbing breast ;
You saw him clasp his bursting head,
An idiot laugh proclaimed the rest.

CANTO THIRD.

D E R A N C E .

C A N T O T H I R D .

1.

OF all the knots which nature ties,
The secret, sacred sympathies,
That, as with viewless chains of gold,
The heart a happy prisoner hold ;
None is more chaste, more bright, more pure,
Stronger stern trials to endure ;
None is more purged of earthly leaven,
More like the love of highest heaven,
Than that which binds, in bonds how blest,
A daughter to a father's breast.
HE robbed by death of half his life ;
That better half his bosom's wife :
Sees, as his widowed eye-lids rove,
In quest of well remembered bliss,

In this fair creature of their love,
As though let loose from Paradise,
The sainted mother breathe again ;
Unwrinkled now by age or pain ;
Not as when last he drank her breath,
And watch'd the troubled brow of death,
But, clad in nature's earliest dress,
In all her virgin loveliness ;
As when, like vision from above,
She taught his youthful soul to love.
He sees—and all the man revives ;
Sees—and a second life he lives.
He loves to watch the daughter's tear
Fall as he speaks the mother's praise :
He loves to fill her hungry ear
With tender tales of other days.
Still more he loves—to feed her eye
With visions of futurity ;
To bid her bow before the Throne
Of the Eternal One ;
Content, nay glad, to linger here,
This solitary flower to rear.

2.

But, O, if in some unblessed hour,

The spoiler seeks that single flower ;
And—spite of all the hallowed fence
That guards the breast of innocence ;
Spite of the watch which angels keep,
Those airy guards—who never sleep ;
Spite of the naked sword of wrath
Suspended o'er his guilty path ;
Treads on its head of maiden white,
Quenches its beam in shades of night.
What anguish rends that father's heart,
From his pale lip what curses part ;
Till taught by better creed to know,
That Heaven which gave, can heal the blow ;
O, what a sum of bliss destroyed,
O, what an aching boundless void
In that poor heart, so rich before,
Scarce heaven itself could yield it more.
He might have borne to see the flood
" Run purple " with her virgin blood ;
For then, as pure that crimson tide,
As the pale limpid wave it dyed ;
He might have borne to see her fall
Pierced by the gaunt assassin's ball ;
For, through the wound, so basely given,
Her soul had winged its way to heaven.

But, O, that blood is doubly spilt
Whose crimson is the dye of guilt ;
And that sad heart without relief
Where anger dries the tear of grief.

3.

Such are the childless father's pangs ;
And such that sire's intense distress,
Who o'er the ruined Laura hangs,
Like the pale ghost of wretchedness.
O, it was then, when rack'd with pain
And death's dark visions round her roll,
When fever fired the sluggish brain,
And loosed the secrets of her soul ;
'Twas then, as touched by that dread dart,
Which all the hidden man unseals ;
She breaks an aged parent's heart,
And all her tale of guilt reveals.

4.

Now—give the march sepulchral way,
Yon aged mourner must not wait ;
He must not meet the light of day ;
He must not pass the castle gate.

That trophied gate must ne'er expand,
 Save to the triumphs of his name ;
 By day, the crowds' insulting hand
 Would point to Laura's spot of shame.
 No—down the secret spiral stair
 They wind—and through the shadowy cave,
 And in its gloomy womb prepare
 A sunless, melancholy grave.

5.

Slow rolls the melancholy dirge
 To that dark vault confined ;
 As you have heard the sullen surge
 Strive with that laboring wind ;
 But, to a father's struggling sigh,
 Fit echo was the minstrelsy.
 Dim burned the torch—its pale blue light,
 Half stifled in the stagnant air,
 Shed on the cheek with terror white,
 The sicklier hue of cold despair ;
 But dimmer than this torch the eye
 Of that sad father's misery.

6.

Hark ! there are footsteps tread

Those chilly caverns of the dead ;
Seemed not some low responsive moan
To echo to that father's groan ?
And, from yon angle of the cave,
 Some mantled form to take his flight ?
Those mourners hearts were stout and brave,
 Yet throbbed those iron hearts with fright,
Darkness, I ween, has power to awe,
 Whom nothing awes beside ;
For fancy mightier ills can draw
 Than e'er are verified.
They paused, the startling sound to catch ;
'Tis gone again—in vain they watch,
Silence resumes her lonely throne,
In that unfathomed world of stone.
Once more he bids the mourners " speed "
And let the march of wo proceed.

7.

They reach the cave, whose rugged mouth
 Inhaled the open air ;
They lodge this fallen flower of youth,
 The coffin'd load they bear.
Vast was that unfrequented cave,

Of hundreds it might be the grave,
But, O, of one lone girl, the doom,
To occupy the giant tomb ;
As if these stubborn rocks were rent
To be her frowning monument.
Deep was the sepulchre, as though
'To bury all a father's wo ;
'Twas deep, as though from curious eye
To shroud a daughter's infamy.

8.

And, now, around the chilly grave,
The hooded mourners press ;
“ Friar, the lost child thou could'st not save
But, O, the Father bless.
Now let some high and hallowed verse,
Chase from his pallid lip the curse ;
O, now by solemn touch assuage,
The mingling storm of grief and rage.”

9.

The chant begins—that holy friar
Had watched o'er Laura's infant hour

Had loved her as another sire,

Had named her once "his own sweet flower."

How had it gladdened now his breast

Could he have called that lost one blest ;

Could he have seen the glittering star

Of hope, upon her grave arise ;

And pointed to the rising car

On which she mounted to the skies.

But, though he loved that flower of youth,

Still more he loved celestial truth ;

And dared he not his prophet's harp

From heaven's high purposes to warp,

And bid it say—that foul offence,

Unwashed by tear of penitence,

Unwashed by that atoning flood,

The pure, the sacrificial blood

Of Him—the Holy One—who dies

The lost world's sinless sacrifice ;

Could e'er be razed, by priestly art,

By tears wrung from a father's heart,

By blood of victims vainly spilt,

From the dark register of guilt.

10.

He bent him o'er that youthful bier.

CANTO THIRD.

Some struggling voice where terror drowns
Soft pity's sweeter, gentler tones ;
And, lo ! a man—whose haggard form
Shows like the spirit of the storm ;
And, like its dark and bellowing cloud
His accents burst upon the crowd ;
“ Not, “ dust to dust,” but LIFE to dust—
“ Where Laura sleeps, De Rance must !
“ These hands, the bridal couch have spread,
“ Now wed the living to the dead.”
Wildly he spake, and wildly leapt
Into the grave where Laura slept
The sleep of eath—THAT awful sleep
Alas—too motionless, and deep
At sight, or sound, or touch to wake,
Save when the last loud thunders shake
The heavens, and elemental war
Summons the dead to GOD's high bar.

12

Could she have waked—her startled form
Had fled the touch of vice ;
For, haply now, she felt the worm
That neither sleeps nor dies.

She waked not—and De Rance lay
As still as though himself were clay ;
Stunned by the fall, it seemed as though
Both perished by a single blow.

13.

O! o'er the aged Chaumont's soul,
What stormy visions dimly roll.
Grief, wrath, and fierce revenge in turns,
In that distempered bosom burn ;
As when within the mountain's side,
Impatient heaves the fiery tide.
Swift, from the now reluctant sheath,
His thirsty falchion flew ;
His dull eye shot the fire of death,
And glowed his cheek with crimson hue ;
He stood above this vital grave
As though, not that itself should save
The spoiler from his arm—as though
Resolved that blood should flow
To expiate the rank offence
Of violated innocence.

14.

But as the torches, quivering light,
Flashed on the livid form below ;

O then—that heart-appalling sight
Turned back the meditated blow,
Palsied, as if by wizard charm,
Fell idly down his hostile arm ;
For, on De Rance's lifeless face,
Such lines of ruin could he trace ;
Of future wo, such dark presage,
Such prematurity of age ;
Such lengthened wo, for crimes so brief—
Such awful emphasis of grief ;
At once he felt to let him wake
Was measureless revenge to take ;
That all the monstrous energy
Of hate itself could not supply,
A weapon of such deadly force
As the barbed arrow of remorse.
To HATE—but mortal arms are given ,
REMORSE unsheaths the arm of heaven.
“ Then let him live ”—he fiercely cries,
“ The wretch, thus living, doubly dies.”

15.

He spake—and, now, his wrinkled hands
O'er his wan face his mantle roll ;

One moment o'er the grave he stands
In dumb dejectedness of soul.
Then flies—as if to leave behind
The anguish of his mind ;
In vain—alas—poor, childless man,
Thy grief, thy feeble steps outran ;
Seek, wanderer—seek some happier road,
Flee from revenge and hate—to God.

16.

Of all that sad and sable train,
None in the vault of death remain ;
They vanished—as the clouds of night,
Melt in the morning's bursting light ;
All went save one—that holy friar,
In whom, extinct all other fire,
That flame which lights an angel's eye,
Burned brightly—blessed charity.
He was a man whose wrinkled cheek,
Might sorrow's furrowing hand bespeak,
Yet, in those furrows, seemed to spring
Harvests of golden die ;
Peace, like the lark on morning wing,
Seeking her native sky.

17.

Skilled was the reverend man to impart
Fit medicines to a broken heart.
On the hoar mountain's rocky breast,
Where the lone eagle builds her nest,
Hung his small cell—'twas poised so high,
To hold deep commerce with the sky ;
To 'scape the din, the toil, the strife,
That cloud the troubled vale of life ;
But, not to shun the aching eye,
Or wrinkled hand of misery.
Throned in that lone and airy cell,
He seemed the wide world's sentinel.
Pilgrim's would climb the mountain's side
As though to reach some healing tide.
They came, they saw, they smiled—their care
Had mounted on his winged prayer.
Still seemed he to that sorrowing crowd
An angel stooping from his cloud,
To medicate, with sweet control,
The troubled waters of the soul.
The wretched loved him—so did heaven ;
Though much, I ween, of priestly leaven

Debased his creed—cradled in youth
Far from the lap of brightest truth,
Denied our common heritage,
That long and late imprisoned page,
Of which God broke the hallowed seals,
Which highest heaven to earth reveals ;
Heaven loved him—and shall we
Quench the bright lamp of charity ?

18.

Such was the man whose melting eye
Surveyed the awful wreck below ;
No curses mingled with his sigh,
No vengeance rolled upon his brow.
If vice triumphant crossed his path,
It stirred the lion of his wrath ;
Show him that vice in grief or pain,
The lion laid him down again.
O, as he stood above the grave,
And saw the ruined man beneath ;
But yesterday, so bright, so brave,
Now, stifling in the bed of death ;
And saw that strong and sinewy form
Just sinking to the hungry worm ;

And saw a man which wore the stamp
And high impress of heaven,
Dying, like some sepulchral lamp,
And dying—unforgiven ;
Then, all his fiery wrath and hate
Were buried in that grave ;
You heard him only supplicate
That fallen man to save ;
To draw him from the worm's abode,
To lead the sufferer up to God.

19.

Nor prayed alone the aged man ;
Finished his hands what prayer began.
Plunged in the grave he toils to bear
De Rance to the purer air.
And, in that high and generous strain,
Seems all his youth to come again.
His vein with boyish vigor warms,
And, nerves, long palsied, string his arms.
Though now, in life's last, feeblest stage,
Zeal seemed to check the march of age ;
And lend the limb, the nerve, the eye,
Some touch of immortality.

20.

O sight sublime—to see the mind
 Vainly, by bars of clay, confined,
 Burst from its prison, and diffuse
 O'er its dark dungeon living hues,
 The half-extinguished man revive,
 The body's very life outlive ;
 Then, as the strings of life decay,
 Spread its light wings and soar away,
 'Midst visions of eternal day.
 Thus have I seen the struggling star,
 Rise from the East, on ebon car ;
 Soon, o'er her sable seat she throws,
 Her glittering robe of virgin snows,
 Transforms, by touches soft and bright,
 Her throne of clouds, to throne of light ;
 Pursues the bright moon to the West,
 And melts upon its silver breast.

21.

So, in that venerable friar,
 Blazed out the mind's ethereal fire,

Though stiffened with the frosts of age,
Wasted by weary pilgrimage,
He bore, with heart and arm unspent,
What many a tougher nerve had bent.

22.

Soon 'scap'd he then the cave of death,
And drank the fresh night's dewy breath.
And see him, now, with trembling hands,
 The healing water bear ;
Over the torpid form he stands
 To shed its virtue there.
And, as the cooling drop descends,
His unreluctant knee he bends,
And supplicates—this silver stream,
Touched by some sanctifying beam,
May change to a baptismal wave,
Body and soul, at once, to save.

23.

Just as he spoke—the infant day
 Awaking from his cloudy bed,

Secret, and soft, one purple ray
 Upon that ashy visage shed,
 " He lives, he lives !" —the good man cries ;
 Seemed it the gush of blood :
 " All righteous heaven " —he dies, he dies ;
 " Ebb'd, has the crimson flood."
 O'er that young orb, some fleeting cloud
 Then swiftly spread its chilly shroud ;
 De Rance's cheek had ceased to glow ;
 The shade of death cross'd o'er his brow.

24.

And yet, as rose the sun again,
 Bright from this brief and cloudy strife ;
 Seemed not the old man's toil in vain,
 Seemed this the sign of coming life.
 And sign it was—the power that sent
 That sun to gild the firmament,
 Quickened, by mystic touch, the brain
 And bade the spirit come again.
 The icy bands of death gave way,
 And the soul struggles into day.

25.

But here the muse must briefly stay

The course of her adventurous lay.
She may not soar, in one bold flight,
To scenes of day, from dens of night ;
Or grasp in one undaunted strain
The heights of joy, and depths of pain.
He who compassionates her toil,
Or loves with her to pause awhile,
Shall haply see her pinion rise
'Midst happier scenes, and brighter skies ;
But let him not with cold disdain
Turn from the moralizing strain
Which, ere she sinks upon her nest,
She leaves him as her fond bequest.

26.

Go—stranger—seek the awful gloom
Of Laura's unfrequented tomb !
What, though no soothing verse be there
To chase the demons of despair ;
What, though no guardian spirit weeps
Around the grave where Laura sleeps ;
What, though no plant of health be found
On that unconsecrated ground ;
Still, in the dark unlettered stones

Reared over her unhallowed bones,
And, in the weeds which slowly wave
On her uncanonized grave,
And, in the fitful blast which falls
Upon those shapeless, sunless walls,
There is a voice, so deep, so dread,
So like the accents of the dead,
It strikes the culprit's iron ear
And fills him with unearthly fear.
He sees a more than mortal light
Break o'er these regions of the night ;
He clasps his hands—he bends his knee ;
“ Vice, Vice,” he cries—“ is Misery !”

And—so IT IS—treasure that truth
Deep in the snowy breast of youth ;
Hence the dead Laura's hapless lot ;
The living Laura knew it not.

CANTO FOURTH.

DERANCE.

CANTO FOURTH.

1.

The roar of brazen-throated war,
The smoking steel, the purple car ;
The weeping valley, once so fair,
Now ploughed by ruin's deadly share ;
The once unspotted virgin flood
Now rolling in its bed of blood ;
The mountain bleached by many a bone,
These works, vile man, are all thine own.
The shepherd's pipe amid the rocks,
The mountain blanch'd with thousand flocks,
The warbling language of the grove,
The mellow harmony of love,
The simple spire that climbs the sky,

So cheering to the good man's eye ;
 The laughing vale uncursed with strife,
 The teeming landscape full of life,
 The happy father's green abode ;
 These, these are all the works of God ;
 Man sheds destruction o'er the plain ;
 God bids the landscape live again.

2.

O, then, if e'er our ark of clay,
 Is tinged and warmed by heavenly ray ;
 If e'er to prostrate man is given
 The mind and high impress of heaven,
 'Tis when, on his uplifted eye
 God sheds the beam of charity ;
 'Tis when, in Misery's cold recess,
 He seeks the bed of wretchedness ;
 Or—nobler—roves from pole to pole
 To save a life—or win a soul ;
 And, if there's aught of human bliss
 Kindred to that of Paradise,
 'Tis that which fills HIS bursting heart
 Whose holy, happy bands impart
 Life to the lifeless—and detain

A spirit from the world of pain ;
 His bliss they never, never feel,
 Who fiercely whet the thirsty steel,
 And draw, as though with vulture's beak,
 Blood from the guiltless and the weak ;
 Who, on their laureled trophy see
 The cold, dark drop of misery ;
 And who, with orphan tears cement
 Their perishable monument.

3.

But, O, if such the joy which sweeps
 Over the bosom of the good,
 Why stands that aged friar and weeps ?
 His are the tears of gratitude ;
 Tears, whose dumb eloquence express
 That choked heart's thankfulness.
 None—none—may proudly hope to paint
 The transport of that aged saint,
 As on De Rance's faded cheek
 He saw health's ruddy morning break.

4.

O mark him, now, upon the bed
 Of his own bosom prop his head ;

And now, he calls the well-known hind,
Whose steps along the valley wind,
Promptly to lend his sinewy arm,
De Rance's chilly brow to warm,
And bear that lost one to the spot,
Where stands the peasant's lonely cot ;
Where 'midst wild nature's mountain scene,
And pillowed on her lap of green ;
'Midst million sweets that spring to birth,
From the full breast of mother earth ;
Deems he that fallen man may find
Health of the body and the mind ;
For, in that cot, as well he knows,
Devotion's modest plant arose ;
Whose living leaf of sacred balm
 Could peace and joy bestow,
The ruffled soul could sweetly calm
 And make a heaven below.

5.

They bear him there—the humble bed
With hands assiduous spread ;
By potent drug the nerves compose ;
Bless him, and leave him to repose.

They leave him—but God left him not ;
 O—or the peasant's lowly cot
 Was bent the eye that never sleeps,
 Which, as it swiftly circling, sweeps
 O'er the dark world—beheld and shed
 One drop of mercy on his head.

6.

Long was his sleep—for long had rest
 Fled from De Rance's stormy breast ;
 And seemed, e'en now the starting limb
 Too conscious of his foul offence ;
 Peace loves her little lamp to trim
 Around the couch of innocence ;
 O—over that distempered brain,
 Crossed many a sad and ghastly train
 Of woes, and crimes of darkest die,
 The busy fancy's progeny.
 Radiant with more than living bloom,
 Now the dead Laura seems to come ;
 He strains her willing hand to clasp :
 His baffled hands a spectre grasp.
 Or, lulled by soothing visions, now
 He listens to her tender vow ;

Strives with fond ear to catch the sound,
Terrific curses roll around ;
Or, now, beneath that bannered tower
He plants and rears love's painted bower ;
And many a dewy flow'ret there
He trains to please that giddy fair ;
At once, the scented fabric shakes ;
Those twining flowers are coiling snakes ;
His joys illusory expire,
He tosses on a sea of fire ;
Laura—her hand with vengeance warm,
Stands like the demon of the storm.

7.

Who would not wake from sleep like this,
And count all waking misery bliss ?
How dread to feed the torpid brain,
To dreams like this fall back again,
And conjure from the world below
Visions of more than mortal wo.
Thus slept De Rance, till at length,
Exhausted even fancy's strength,
He found a refuge from distress
In deep and dumb forgetfulness ;

Nor woke—till sunk the sun to rest
On that soft bosom of the west.

8.

De Rance woke—but *where* is he ?
 “ Whose this abode of penury ;
 “ Where is the Friar—and Chaumont, where,
 “ And where the tomb of dark despair ;
 “ And whose the sweet and simple lay,
 “ That seems my soul to ease.
 “ Seems that untutored strain to say
 “ There *is* a way to peace ?”
 He lists to hear the artless song,
 Which swelled the rustic chords among ;
 So simple was the note he heard,
 It might have been some mountain bird.

I.

A wanderer on the world of waves,
 In vain, the little swallow craves
 Some clime of spring ;
 How sad she eyes the watery waste,
 Till, lighting on some friendly mast,
 She rests her aching wing,

II.

“ Thus have I wandered far and long
“ The barren world’s wide wastes among,
 “ In search of peace ;
“ I found it not—till from afar,
“ Arose the holy eastern star,
 “ And bade my sorrows cease.

III.

“ Now near the altar of my GOD,
“ I choose my safe and blest abode,
 “ From morn till even ;
“ O, still, upon its hallowed breast,
“ My heart shall build her lowly nest,
 “ And find an earthly heaven.”

9.

“ And can it be ?” De Rance cries,
“ That peace, which from the mighty flies,
“ Dwells in the cottage ? Can it be
“ That GOD must banish misery ?
“ But hark—for now some gentler strain
“ Awakes the artless lyre again.”

A lighter finger crossed the string,
A sweeter voice began to sing ;
Again he hushed the heart's deep sigh
To catch the rustic melody.

I.

“ Dear is the hallowed morn to me,
“ When village bells awake the day ;
“ And, by their sacred minstrelsy,
“ Call me from earthly cares away.

II.

“ And dear to me the winged hour,
“ Spent in thy hallowed courts, O Lord ;
“ To feel devotion's soothing power,
“ And catch the manna of thy word.

III.

“ And, dear to me the loud ‘ Amen,’
“ Which echoes through the blest abode,
“ Which swells, and sinks, and swells again,
“ Dies on the walls, but lives to God.

IV.

“ And, dear the simple melody,
“ Sung with the pomp of rustic art ;

“ That holy, heavenly harmony,
“ The music of a thankful heart.

V.

“ In secret I have often prayed,
“ And still the anxious tear would fall ;
“ But on thy sacred altar laid,
“ The fire descends and dries them all.

VI.

“ Oft when the world, with iron bands,
“ Has bound me in its six-days chain,
“ This bursts them, like the strong man's hands,
“ And lets my spirit loose again.

VII.

“ Then, dear to me the Sabbath morn,
“ The village bells the shepherd's voice ;
“ These oft have found my heart forlorn,
“ And always bid that heart rejoice.

VIII.

“ Go, man of pleasure, strike thy lyre,
“ Of broken Sabbaths sing the charms ;
“ Ours are the prophet's car of fire,
“ Which bears us to a Father's arms.”

10.

De Rance listened—and each word
Touched in his heart some echoing chord ;
So sweet upon his ear it broke,
It was as though an angel spoke.
And even ere she ceased to sing,
His long-imprisoned soul took wing,
And soared to that high throne, whence she
Had learned this hallowed harmony ;
And sought, amidst the heavenly choir,
A spark of that seraphic fire,
Which might dark memory's dreams destroy,
And tune his soul to songs of joy.

11.

Nor ceased he till that rustic sire,
No longer musical the strain,
Yet pregnant with celestial fire,
Began to speak again.
For he was wont—his labors done,
As softly set the summer's sun,

And from the chambers of the west
Called an exhausted world to rest ;
To watch the half-extinguished ray,
And check the giddy foot of play,
And busier housewife's homely task,
And summoned all to bend and ask,
Whilst lingered yet the ray of even,
Pardon and peace from heaven.
And he would pray, that when the night
Of death should quench in clouds *his sun*,
Just such a beam, so mildly bright,
Might gild the course which he had run.

12.

'Twas now the hour—and through the door,
Part opened, might De Rance see ;
How falsely those are deemed the poor,
Whose breasts are rich in piety ;
No brighter gem, I ween, is set,
In royal blazing coronet.
O, how his pulse beat quick and high ;
How rushed the tear-drop to his eye,
As, one by one, the little clan
Came trooping round the plain good man ;

And won a smile, or stole a kiss,
 The roses of their paradise.
 Seemed it to him—that holy love,
 Exiled from courts—like some lone dove
 Which ruffian violence expels,
 Fled here—and to the village bells
 Sat listening, while she plumed her wing;
 Then 'gan responsive notes to sing,
 Till every rock and waving wood,
 Rang with the hymn of gratitude.

13.

The greeting o'er, that happy sire
 Trims cheerly up his little fire;
 And strives to light in every eye,
 The ray of reverend gayety;
 For well he knew—the ear of youth
 Is trebly barred against the truth
 That comes disfigured in the dress
 Of cold and scowling wretchedness;
 That, who the infant soul would move
 Must make it feel—that “**GOD IS LOVE.**”

14.

Then, when his watchful eye could trace

Joy throned upon each ruddy face ;
De Rance sees him raise his hand,
To that high shelf where marshalled stand
A few lean volumes, all his store,
Small prize to him—of worldly lore.
High o'er the rest—one volume stood,
It was the sacred book of GOD ;
That book which, to the astonished eye,
Unveils the present Deity ;
Which, from the tossing couch of pain,
Oft lifts us as with viewless chain,
And recreates the famished sense,
With highest heaven's magnificence.
O, as the rustic father took,
With sun-burnt hand, that poor man's book,
'Twas just as when the morning's breath,
Crosses the wan and withering wreath,
And sheds, as though with mystic power,
A sudden freshness o'er the flower ;
You saw the beam of gladness break
In sudden lustre o'er his cheek.

15.

Then, as the wary pilot tries
To land his bark on safest shores,

This treasured wisdom of the skies,
 The parent's anxious eye explores,
 Some simple, touching page to find,
 Such as might win the infant mind.
 Nor sought he long, for though there lie
 Plunged in the abyss of mystery,
 (Like gems in deepest caverns found,)
 Depth for the deepest too profound ;
 Yet, float upon that sacred sea,
 The flowers of sweet simplicity ;
 Flowers, perfumed by breath of heaven,
 To simplest minds profusely given.

16.

He sought not long—for soon his eye
 Lights on the moving history,
 Where HE, the guilty world's High Lord,
 By infant cherubim adored,
 Bade " little children come " and rest
 Their heads upon his hallowed breast.
 Finished the tale—the holy man,
 To school his little tribe began ;
 At once—arose that childish band,

At once, they seized his horny hand,
And bade him guide them on the road
That leads—to happiness and God.
O! if there be whose scornful eyes
The poor man's simple joys despise ;
I would they had been there to see
What are the joys of poverty,
To count the precious tears which start,
Warm from a poor man's thankful heart.
He wept to see the golden morn
Of piety, thus early dawn ;
He wept to see the breathing page
Thus sweetly touch their tender age ;
Transform them as with Prophet's rod,
And make his child—the child of God.
Then—for in that more southern clime
They fondly love the tinkling rhyme,
And each gay peasant, as he roves,
Catches the music of the groves,
The warbling language of the sky,
Sweet nature's holy melody ;
Then might you see that happy sire
Resume his ne'er forgotten lyre :
And as he swept the simple string,
Wake every infant lip to sing

Strains which might wound a critic's ear,
But which a God delights to hear.

17.

De Rancee heard the song—and such
The magic of the truth,
So do the notes of nature touch
Sung by a childish mouth,
He fondly thought, that as they sang,
Heaven's azure vault responsive rang ;
And, sailing by on angel wing,
A million spirits seemed to sing,
A million voices seemed to say,
“ Come, fellow-spirits, come away.”
Fain would he, then, have burst his chain
To soar amidst that infant train.
De Rance—no—ere *that* shall be,
Oft must thou bend thine unbent knee ;
Oft, on that sin of scarlet dye,
Shed the hot tear of misery ;
Stoop from thine airy throne of pride,
And bow before “ the crucified.”

18.

But, O—how labored every vein
In that poor prostrate man,
As thus, to moralize again,
The rustic sire began ;
“ My children—if your infant eyes
“ Would see the wretchedness of vice ;
“ Go, count the wrinkles of the head
“ Now stretched upon our lowly bed ;
“ Go there, and mark that blasted tree
“ Cursed by the breath of Deity ;
“ Go, read the lessons writ in blood,
“ That ‘ none are happy but the good.’
“ Then, sweet ones, shall our simple prayer
“ Ask heaven to smooth his brow of care ;
“ To heal the branch so deeply riven,
“ And lift its leafless head to heaven.”

19.

They bow the knee—prefer the prayer ;
O, as it floated in mid air,
Above that agonized bed ;

An angel, from his censor, shed
Sweet incense—on whose sainted wings
To Mercy's golden throne it springs ;
And brings a thousand blessings down,
On him who dared not hope for one.

20.

I must not linger, now, to paint
The raptures of that rustic saint,
When, echoing to his own, arise
De Rance's accents to the skies.
When, from the ground, and prostrate there
He breathed the penitential prayer ;
When heaven a beam of mercy shed
Upon that lost one's aching head ;
Nor may the infant muse essay,
To trace, in metaphysic lay,
The mind's slow march from earth to heaven,
The acquittal of the unforgiven ;
The gradual dawn—the burst of light,
Upon that soul of thickest night ;
The mental flowers which strangely blow,
Like roses on a waste of snow.

21.

He who has climbed the giddy height
 Where Polar mountains rise,
 Mantled in everlasting white,
 Pillared on props of ice ;
 And seen, from six months' chilly sleep,
 The tardy sun arise ;
 Now, on the horizon dimly creep,]
 Now, rush o'er all the skies ;
 And seen the frozen thousands come,
 To greet the wanderer home ;
 And heard each cavern's deep recess,
 Echo the shout of thankfulness ;
That favored man might not despair,
 With magic colors borrowed there,
 And other skill than mine—to trace
 The lights which, slowly stealing, chase
 The mental shades—and o'er the soul
 A golden tide of glories roll.
 Still lest, the more ambitious muse
 To touch this lowly theme refuse,
 Ere sinks to rest my dying strain,
 I sweep the timid string again.

22.

Where, 'midst her gloomy waste of wood,
And girt by many a rushing flood,
Whose deep and melancholy moan
Seems but the never-ceasing groan
Of those who, fell'd by secret blow,
Sink in the hungry gulf below ;
La Trappe her mitred forehead rears,
Gray with the storms of thousand years ;
There—rises, 'midst the unbroken gloom,
One low and solitary tomb ;
Which, if the hooded palmer see,
At once he bends his nerveless knee ;
Crosses, devout, his aged breast,
And seems to lay his cares to rest.
The wretched often wander there
To shed the tear of dark despair ;
They kneel—the tear has dried away,
Like mist-drops in the blush of day.
And often, when the midnight bell
Wakes the cold slumbers of his cell,
The watchful monk, with feet unshod,
Comes here, as though to meet his God ;

As though there dwelt, in that dark hour,
 And darker grave, mysterious power,
 To touch the hidden springs of vice,
 And all its power to paralyze ;
 To break corruption's awful spell,
 And rout the rebel hosts of hell.

23.

Ask—*why* he comes ?—and he replies,
 “ O, 'tis a heaven below the skies ;
 “ There is a spirit lingers here
 “ Which chases every scalding tear ;
 “ Angels keep watch around the tomb,
 “ And light from GOD dispels the gloom.”
 Ask “ *whose* the canonized bones
 “ That sleep 'midst yonder unhewn stones ?”
 “ *De Rance's*—there imprisoned lies,
 “ Whatever of a good man dies,
 “ The man himself has burst his prison,
 “ And to his Master's bosom risen.
 “ Once *bad* and *wretched*—to his GOD,
 “ At length, the stiffened knee he bent ;
 “ Some spirit waved a viewless rod
 “ Above the prostrate penitent.
 “ O, then, a sacred influence stole

“ Over his agonized soul,
“ And beamed upon his aching eye,
“ Those sister visions of the sky,
“ The stars of *peace* and *piety*.
“ 'Twas just as when, ere time began,
“ Ere wakened uncreated man,
“ Some breath o'er all the chaos blows ;
“ At once the Lord of earth arose,
“ And, as with front erect he trod,
“ Seemed to be only less than God.
“ So—rose De Rance—from the dust
“ Of sordid, selfish, brutal lust ;
“ So bright the altered course he ran,
“ Men deemed him something more than man.
“ Oft would he climb yon hill at even,
“ To catch a nearer glimpse of heaven ;
“ With moralizing eye to trace
“ The lessons writ on nature's face ;
“ To see, in rocks by lightning rent,
“ Wrath's melancholy monument ;
“ In the gay flower and spicy grove,
“ The fairer evidence of love.”
Then kindling with a Prophet's fire,
Seized he his prostituted lyre,
As, anxious, to expunge the stain,

Of his once wild and lawless strain ;
And first upon the listening sense,
Stole the sad notes of penitence ;
With trembling hand, and stifling breath,
He sang of guilt, and wo, and death.
Soon raised to heaven his dewy eye,
Subsides that touching melody ;
Seems, then, fair peace, with golden wing,
To light upon his sorrowing string.
At once, there bursts upon the ear
Such harmony as angels hear ;
And the glad rock, and hill, and flood,
Echo the notes of gratitude.
Thus lived and died the holy man,
And, stranger—who, with weary span,
Has reached these lonely towers—would'st thou
Some surer path to rapture know,
Than that his erring footsteps trod ?
Then—SHUN HIS CRIMES—but—SERVE HIS GOD.

24.

“ What, then, the moralist may say ;
“ And does the superstitious lay
“ Direct the pilgrim to the lap
“ Of bigotry, and dark La Trappe
“ In search of bliss—to sunless towers,
“ Where fast and penance waste the hours
“ Which man demands—to Moloch’s throne,
“ To gloomy rites—to men of stone,
“ To the cold cell—and midnight grove,
“ Where ’tis forgot that ‘ God is Love ? ’ ”

25.

No, reasoner—no—perish the lay
That would the pilgrim lead astray ;
To one, sole altar points this hand,
The altar of my native land.
Church of my sire’s—my love to thee
Was nurtured with my infancy ;
And now maturer thoughts approve
The object of that infant love ;
Linked to my soul with hooks of steel

By all I say, and do, and feel ;
By records that refresh my eye
In the rich page of memory ;
By blessings at thine altar given,
By scenes which lift the soul to heaven,
By monuments which proudly rise,
The trophies of the good and wise ;
By graves, forever sad and dear,
Still reeking with my constant tear ;
Where those in honored slumber lie,
Whose deaths have taught me how to die ;
And shall I not, with all my powers,
Watch round my venerable towers ?
And can I bid the pilgrim flee
To holier mother than to thee ?
And can I bid him turn his feet,
From fields with flowers of mercy sweet,
To gloomy wastes, and chilly cells,
Where frowning superstition dwells ?
Still—such is truth's resistless art,
To heal a lost and broken heart ;
And such, though wrapped in deep disguise,
Its sleepless, countless, energies ;
That though De Rance's erring eye,
Woo'd the dark shade of piety,

Heard but the thunders of its law,
Quenched more than half his love in awe ;
Sweet mercy marked that suppliant's knee,
Who bowed too low her smile to see ;
And heard his penitential prayer,
And made him **HAPPY—EVEN THERE.**

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